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ABSTRACT

The first of a three-part investigation, this study examined the impact of experiences with adults in nontraditional occupations on elementary school children's sex stereotyped beliefs. Objectives were to determine what career-related sex stereotypes today's children have; whether these stereotypes can be changed through a program of exposure to nontraditional workers; and whether individual sex stereotypes dictate job choice. A total of 125 children in grades K-5 of an Albuquerque (New Mexico) public school responded to 30 stick figures representing 30 different occupations, indicating whether the job was one that men, women, or both could perform, and which jobs the children would like to have as adults. As part of the project, nontraditional workers from a variety of occupations visited the classrooms. Data from the study yielded the following information: (1) attitudinal changes can be affected by exposing children to nontraditional workers; (2) direct exposure to a specific worker affected children's stereotypes regardless of sex, age, grade, or race; (3) attitudinal changes were greater for girls than boys; (4) attitudinal changes of second graders were higher than those of any other age group; and (5) for all ages, grades, and both sexes, occupational stereotypes dictate job choice. (LP)

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OCCUPATIONAL STEREOTYPING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Do today's children, born after the dawn of modern feminism, still hold stereotyped notions of men's and women's work and can these notions be changed or modified. The present study examined the impact of experiences with adults in non-traditional (sex-role reversed) occupations upon elementary school children's sex-stereotyped beliefs. Subjects were 125 children in grades K through 5 at a local public school in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The goals of this research were threefold: 1.) to determine the present day career related sex-stereotypes that the children possess, 2.) to determine if these stereotypes can be changed through our program of exposure to non-traditional workers and 3.) to determine if individual sex-stereotypes dictate job choice. This research is Part one of a three part investigation with the final objective of creating a sex-equitable vocational awareness curriculum for the elementary grades K through 5.

METHODS

An occupational sex-stereotyping test instrument was designed specifically for this research project. The instrument consisted of thirty (30) stick figure pictures representing 30 different occupations. Students were asked to classify the pictures as to who "could" perform these jobs. The categories were "men only", "women only", or "both men and women". In

addition, the children were asked to identify which jobs of the thirty presented they would like to be when they grow up. Once students had selected as many jobs as they wanted, they were then asked to make a forced choice and select only three jobs that they would someday like to hold as adults. The thirty occupations utilized in this study were as follows:

Zookeeper	Computer Operator	Farmer
Seamstress	School Teacher	Balloonist
Astronaut	Truck Driver	Artist
Miner	Tennis Player	Clerk
Singer	Firefighter	Mail Carrier
Basketball Player	Model	Pilot
News Broadcaster	Police Officer	Lawyer
Cook	Veterinarian	Forest Ranger
Secretary	Doctor	Soldier
Waitperson	Mechanic	Heavy Equipment

Students' responses were recorded as 1 if they perceived the occupation as male only, 3 if they perceived the occupation as for both men and women, and 5 if they perceived the job as female only. Data was analyzed by utilizing T-test and Chi Square statistical analysis. An alpha level of less than .001 indicated significance.

The project treatment involved bringing non-traditional workers in various occupations into the classroom to visit and speak with the children for 30 minutes. In one case, a class visited the job site of a non-traditional worker. The non-traditional workers that visited or were visited by the children included the following:

Veterinarian (women)	Police Officer (woman)
Race Care Driver (woman)	Pilot (woman)
Secretary (man)	Basketball Player (woman)
Firefighter (woman)	T.V. Broadcaster (woman)
Miner (woman)	Judge (woman)

RESULTS

Goal number one of this research study was to determine the present day career related sex-stereotypes that the children possess. Of the thirty occupations utilized in this study, the children placed 2 in the "women only" category. These occupations were seamstress and secretary. The 9 occupations placed in the category "men only" consisted of a farmer, astronaut, miner, firefighter, pilot, forest ranger, soldier, mechanic, and a heavy equipmnet operator. The remaining 19 occupations were placed in the category "both men and women". This data indicates that the present day occupational stereotypes of children have changed compared to past research in this area.

Past research indicated that children attribute many job skills and/or job preferences exclusively to women or to men. In addition, this effect has been noted as more marked in younger children than in older elementary school children (Garrett, Ein and Tremaine, 1977; Shephard & Hess, 1975). In this study data indicates that children are not attributing job skills exclusively to men or women as in the past. The children are developing a third category for occupations that states that both men and women could do the job. Analysis of this data by sex and age indicates that the children in this study perceive the world similarly and that no significant differences existed between the sex-stereotypes of girls and boys between the ages of 5 and 11 years. The only differences that were found among the girls and boys in their sex-typing were on two occupations. These occupations were a basketball player and a secretary. The boys (55%) felt that "both men and women" could be secretaries while

the girls (62%) felt that "women only" could be secretaries. However, the boys (60%) felt that "men only" could be basketball players and the girls (51%) felt that "both men and women" could be basketball players. Even though this data was not significant it does point to the fact that the sex-role socialization of boys and girls is still present and differentiated by certain attributes that the society associates with males and females. In regard to age differences our data indicates that by the age of five years old, the children have already classified the world of work into the three categories. It also can be noted that the categories utilized by five year olds is very similar to that of children 6 through 11. This contradicts past research that stated that younger children attribute many job skills exclusively to women or men. Developmentally, we know that young children under seven years of age have extreme difficulty in attending to three categories at one time. We were aware of this during the testing phases and assisted the young children verbally in attending to all three categories. This may account for the discrepancies in our findings with past research.

The second goal of this research study was to determine if the children's occupational sex-typing attitudes could be changed through our program of bringing them in contact with non-traditional workers. Our results indicate that the program changed attitudes. Of the thirty occupations utilized in this study, children changed their attitudes on the following ten (10) occupations.

Farmer	Astronaut	Miner*
Firefighter*	Basketball Player*	Pilot*

Forest Ranger Secretary* Soldier
Mechanic

The astericks placed beside an occupation indicate those occupations that were in the treatment program. The data from this phase of the research investigation yielded the following information:

1. Attitudinal changes can be affected by exposing children to non-traditional workers.

2. Attitudinal changes are both specific and general in regard to this exposure. That is, direct exposure to a specific worker affected the childrens' stereotypes and at the same time, caused a carryover or generalized effect to other occupations. This effect occurred regardless of sex, age, grade or race.

3. Attitudinal changes of girls was greater than the attitudinal changes of boys.

4. Attitudinal changes of second graders was higher than any other grade level.

5. Attitudinal changes of eight year old children was greater than any other age group.

The third goal of this research was to determine if individual sex-stereotypes dictate job choice. In order to ascertain this information, we compared the childrens' three forced choices of what they would like to be when they grew up with their own stereotypes of the occupations presented. Our data indicates that for all ages, all grades and both sexes, occupational sex-stereotypes dictate job choice. However, the categories from which boys and girls choose their job choices is different. Boys select their job preferences largely from the

"male only" category while girls select their job preferences from the "both men and women" category. In addition no boys selected any job they had previous classified as "women only" while 8% of the girls participating in the study selected a job they had previously classified as "male only". In further reviewing the data, we examined the jobs most often selected as preferences in both the pretesting and postesting session. Our findings indicated that job preference selections remained overwhelmingly traditionally male or female jobs, despite attitudinal changes.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study and from previous research we have learned that researchers have just begun to understand the interrelatedness of sex-sterotypes, gender development and vocational awareness. Even though we were able to change sex-stereotypic attitudes of children, we were unable to signficantly affect their job preferences for adulthood.

An abundance of research surfaced in the last decade relative to this topic. This past research has just begun to define the issuses. Further research is needed to begin attacking the problems. It is now time to ask research questions beyond defining the existence of vocational sex-stereotypes. It is time to ask questions beyond how to affect attitudinal change in young children. It is now time for researchers to ask how do we broaden personal career choices of all children.

Our data indicates a third category of "both men and women" is emerging in young children. Our research will continue in defining methods of how to maintain the growth of this category

as well as focus on how to assist children in internalizing the possibilities that this category offers to them in their development as adults

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